

for Seniors and Families into the 21st Century Act. The Banking Committee sent a strong message regarding this bill by passing it unanimously on a voice vote, and I stand before you today to reiterate its merits.

As a Floridian, I cannot help but be acutely aware of the housing needs of senior citizens. Our warm weather attracts retirees to our state, and we appreciate them for both the contributions that they make to our economy and as well as to the substantial roles they play in our community. While medical innovations permit seniors to enjoy a higher quality of life, a wave of new retirees coupled with longer life-spans have led to a crisis in affordable housing for the elderly. By the year 2020, the GAO estimates that one in six Americans will be 65 years of age or older. In Florida, that ratio has been surpassed—18.5% of the population is already over 65 years old and that number is growing. More significantly, 11.2% of Florida's senior population live below poverty income levels, making affordable housing even more important to Floridians.

H.R. 202 addresses the needs of senior citizens by implementing several important measures. It allows for modernization of project financing and a streamlined refinancing program to encourage continued participation in housing projects—an extremely important goal in light of the number of expiring assistance contracts.

The bill also provides for greater flexibility in programs, such as creating mixed-income senior and disabled housing environments, and the conversion of senior housing projects to assisted living facilities that conform with an "aging in place" model. This model takes the approach that seniors in community housing may not wish to be able to move as they become older. Projects can be developed that follow the aging of its residents, instead of forcing them out as their needs change.

Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to the bipartisan effort that went into H.R. 202, as well as the valuable contribution that H.R. 202 would make to the ability of our senior citizens across the nation to afford housing. I therefore strongly encourage a positive vote on the Preserving Housing for Seniors and Families into the 21st Century Act.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 202 and urge its adoption.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, I have been inundated with calls and letters from seniors living in Section 8 housing units where owners were prepaying their mortgages or opting out of their contract renewals thereby terminating their relationship with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and leaving their senior tenants without any housing security.

Following a meeting in my district office with the Mayor of Waltham, Massachusetts, representatives of the Boston HUD office, and other local officials, I wrote the following letter to Secretary Cuomo, and a similar letter to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget Jack Lew, to explain the serious problems facing seniors in Waltham and elsewhere in my district and throughout the nation:

JANUARY 21, 1999.

Hon. ANDREW M. CUOMO,
Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and
Urban Development, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY CUOMO: I am writing to ask that you give full attention and high pri-

ority to the issue of Section 8 Contract Renewals as you review and consult with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding the Administration's Fiscal Year 2000 Budget Proposal. While I would like to bring to your attention the specific situation confronting 258 seniors in my Congressional district currently housed at the Francis Cabot Lowell Mill (the "Mill") apartment complex in Waltham, Massachusetts, where a 20-year lease negotiated with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is due to expire at the end of this year, I believe that the problems facing residents at the Mill will confront thousands of seniors across America as more of these long-term contracts expire. My office has already received dozens of letters and phone calls from Mill seniors who are frightened at the prospect of losing their housing.

I recently met in my district office with Mr. William F. Stanley, Mayor of Waltham, Massachusetts, Ms. Mary Lou Crane, HUD's Secretary's Representative for the Boston Region, Mr. Bob Kargman, representing the Mill owners, their various associates, and telephonically with Mr. Bill Apgar, Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research. The focus of the meeting was Public Law 105-65, Section 524(a)(1) which states in part "... the Secretary may use amounts available for the renewal of assistance under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, upon termination or expiration of a contract for assistance under section 8 ... to provide assistance under section 8 of such Act at rent levels that do not exceed comparable market rents for the market area. The assistance shall be provided in accordance with terms and conditions prescribed by the Secretary."

Mr. Kargman informed the group that negotiations for a new lease contract had hit a snag over the issue of meeting fair market rent levels, and that residents were being informed that the Mill lease may not be renewed. Mayor Stanley expressed his concern that given the current housing stock in Waltham, it would be virtually impossible to keep all of the seniors currently living at the Mill in Waltham, thus doing tremendous damage to the spirit and continuity of the senior population in the city. Mr. Apgar indicated that HUD was empowered by law to more closely approximate comparable market rent levels in Waltham, but the money was not available and that discussions were under way between representatives from HUD and OMB.

As I understand it, the federal government has reaped the financial benefit of housing reform in renegotiating HUD leases in areas where market rents are below the national average—roughly in eighty percent of markets. But for the remaining twenty percent of markets, primarily markets on the coasts, market rents are higher than the national average. I believe that we have an obligation as policymakers to the seniors living in these higher rent areas, such as those in Waltham, as well as to the owners of the developments, who have kept faith with their tenants and the government, to renew their contract under the terms and conditions of Public Law 105-65.

I am hopeful that you will carefully examine this matter, and consult with the OMB Director Lew, in an effort to develop a plan to fully fund those contract renewals where comparable market rents exceed the national average.

I look forward to your response,

Sincerely,

EDWARD J. MARKEY.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleagues in both parties for bringing the House's attention to these important issues,

and for compiling a bill that encompasses many important reforms to give seniors housing security. I am pleased that the bill will specifically address the problems created by the booming rental economy in the greater Boston area—seniors in subsidized housing are getting squeezed.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that the House will pass H.R. 202 today to bring much-needed reassurance to the seniors in my district and every Congressional District in the United States. Our seniors deserve no less.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. UPTON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 202, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 202.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

EXTENDING REENACTMENT OF CHAPTER 12 OF TITLE 11, UNITED STATES CODE

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2942) to extend for 6 additional months the period for which chapter 12 of title 11 of the United States Code is reenacted, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2942

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS.

Section 149 of title I of division C of Public Law 105-277, as amended by Public Law 106-5, is amended—

(1) by striking "October 1, 1999" each place it appears and inserting "January 1, 2000"; and

(2) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking "March 31, 1999" and inserting "September 30, 1999"; and

(B) by striking "April 1, 1999" and inserting "October 1, 1999".

SEC. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by section 1 shall take effect on October 1, 1999.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) and the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).